DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 333 297 CG 023 452

AUTHOR Snodgrass, Sara E.
TITLE Sex Role Stereotypes Are Alive and Well.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Higher Education; Sex Differences; *Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; *Student Attitudes; Trend Analysis

ABSTRACT

Two studies, in late 1988 and early 1990, examined sex-role stereotypes held by northeastern liberal arts college students (N=719) and southern state university college students (N=145). The first study used the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) and compared ratings of men and women with the traditional sex-roles represented by the PAQ in the early 1970s. Subjects rated "masculine" men, women, and persons significantly differently from their ratings of "feminine" men, women, and persons. The second study examined subjects' definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" when applied to a man, a woman, or a person. "Masculine" and "feminine" were perceived quite differently by the subjects in this study. Masculine represented task-orientation and power-orientation, while "feminine" represented social-orientation. The only terms not differentiating "masculine" and "feminine" were "logical" and "competent," terms associated with career and task-orientation. Other task-oriented terms were perceived to be "masculine" (e.g. successful, good leader, active, respected). These results suggest that stereotypes continue to characterize masculinity as agentic and femininity as communal. These studies reflect that sex-role stereotypes do not appear to be dissolving 20-25 years after they were first defined. Men were still perceived as agentic and forceful and women were perceived as more communal and passive. (BHK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED333297

SEX ROLE STEREOTYPES ARE ALIVE AND WELL

Sara E. Snodgrass

Florida Atlantic University

Running Head: Sex role stereotypes

Sara E. Snodgrass
Department of Sociology & Social Psychology
Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, FL 33431-0991
(407) 367-3274

CG023452

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sara E. Snodgrass

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SEX ROLE STEREOTYPES ARE ALIVE AND WELL

Abstract

Two studies are reported that examine sex-role stereotypes held by college students in late 1988 and early 1990 in a northeastern liberal arts college and in a southern state university. One study used the Personal Attributes Questionnaire and compared ratings of men and women with the traditional sex-roles represented by the PAQ in the early 70s. The second study examined subjects' definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" when applied to a man, a woman, or a person. Results of the studies reflect that sex-role stereotypes have changed very little in the past 15 years. Men are described with agentic traits and women are described with communal traits.

Author's Note

An earlier version of this research was presented at the American Psychological Association Annual Meeting in Boston in August, 1990.

I would like to thank Elizabeth Haber and Katherine Brown for their assistance.

Requests for reprints should be sent to Sara E. Snodgrass, Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431-0991.

SEX ROLE STEREOTYPES ARE ALIVE AND WELL

Two studies are reported that examine sex-role stereotypes held by college students at the turn of the decade. College-age men and women express the opinion that sex-role stereotypes are vanishing, that their generation perceives men and women to be more similar than different and without specific roles. These studies were undertaken to find out if it is true that college students today hold less defined stereotypes of men and women; that today's perceptions of men and women do not define as many attributes that are more characteristic of one sex than the other.

Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman (1968) established that people hold sex role stereotypes that attribute agentic, forceful, independent characteristics to men and attribute nurturant, passive, sensitive characteristics to women. Studies in the early 80s reported that sex-role stereotypes had changed very little during the 1970s (e.g. Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Ruble, 1983; Werner & LeRussa, 1984). Ruble used the Personal Attributes Questionniare (PAQ), a self-report instrument which consistently differentiated the typical man from the typical woman by raters of both sexes in the early

70s (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974). Ruble (1983) found a

decade later that ratings of a typical man differed significantly from ratings of a typical woman on 53 of the 54 items on the PAQ, but that ratings of characteristics that are desirable for either sex differed significantly only on 12 of the 54 items. Werner & LeRussa (1984) replicated a 1957 study by Sherriffs and McKee and found that while the basic content of the stereotypes has changed very little, women are evaluated more favorably and men less favorably in 1978 than in 1957. Heilman, et al. (1989) replicated a study by Schein (1973) in which men, women, and successful managers were rated on 92 attributes. Heilman, et al. had subjects (managers) rate men and women (in general, as managers, or as successful managers), and, in addition, subjects rated successful managers (with no sex given). They found, as had Schein (1973), that the attributes of successful managers were more similar to the attributes of men than to the attributes of women. They also found that women managers were still seen to be different from "successful managers" unless they were explicitly described as successful.

What are the stereotypes held of men and women in the late 1980s, if any? This paper will report two studies of current sex-role stereotypes conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990 in an exclusive northeastern liberal arts college and in a southern state university.

STUDY I

As a class exercise to introduce the topic of roles and sex roles in particular, students in social psychology classes in a northeastern liberal arts college were given the short form of the Personal Attributes Questionniare (PAQ, Spence and Helmreich, 1978). In the class discussions of sex roles that followed, the students generally agreed that sex role stereotypes were no longer applicable to their generation, that men and women were perceived to be more similar than different and without different roles. This study was designed within the class to investigate this "hypothesis" held by the students.

The short form of the PAQ was used as an instrument to identify the sex role stereotypes held by college students in this college in late 1988. The PAQ was developed from the items originally used by Rosenkrantz, et al. (1968) A short form was developed (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) containing 24 items such as "not at all aggressive - very aggressive", "very rough - very gentle", "gives up easily - never gives up." These 24 items represented sex role stereotypes in the 1970s, and the inventory has been used widely in research concerning sex role stereotypes throughout the past two decades.

Method

Subjects. Seven hundred and nineteen students (360 males and 359 females) from a northeastern liberal arts college (approximately one-third of the student body) were recruited by 60 students enrolled in introductory social psychology courses.

Each student recruited six men and six women, primarily from among their friends and dormitories, to complete questionnaires.

Procedure. Each student recruited two men and two women each to complete questionnaires on which they rated a "typical mature adult man," two men and two women who rated a "typical mature adult woman," and two men and two women who rated a "typical mature adult person" on the 24 items of the short version of the PAQ (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). The students were instructed to have their 12 subjects complete the questionnaire in front of them, either in small groups or individually. The questionnaire had the following instructions on the top of the page (one-third substituted "man" for "person" and one-third substituted "woman"):

> We are conducting a study to see how college students would describe people today. The items below inquire about your perceptions of a typical mature adult person. Each item consists of a pair of characteristics, with the numbers 1-6 in between. Each pair describes contradictory characteristics--that is, you cannot be both at the same time. The numbers form a scale between the two extremes. You are to choose a number which describes where you think a typical mature adult person falls on the scale.

The items were rated from 1-6, some items had 1 to indicate "not at all" or "never" and 6 to indicate "very", and other items

had 1 and 6 indicating opposite adjectives (such as "very home oriented - very worldly"). All data was collected within one week in the fall of 1988.

Results

A 2 x 3 (sex of subject x sex of target, both between groups factors) analysis of variance was performed on each of the 24 items as well as on composite variables representing the original masculinity and femininity subscales of the PAQ. A significant sex of target main effect was found for all but 5 of the 24 items. T-tests comparing men versus women targets produced significant differences on all 19 items. Seventeen of the 19 significant differences between man and woman were significant with $p < .001$. "Kind" and "never gives up" were both significant with $p = .04$. Table 1 lists the 24 items, their means by target, and the significant effects associated with each.

Insert Table 1 about here

T-tests comparing "person" with "man" and with "woman" revealed that ratings for "person" differed significantly from ratings for "man" on 10 of the 19 items which had produced sex of target main effects, and ratings of "person" differed significantly from ratings of "woman" on 17 of the 19 items. These items are identified on Table 1, and the means indicate the direction of the difference. Overall, it appears that "person"

was rated more like "man" than like "woman", especially on the more traditionally feminine items.

A significant sex of subject main effect was found on 4 items. Females rated targets significantly more "gentle" than did males ($F(1,709)=4.73$, $p=.03$); females rated targets significantly more "worldly" than did males ($F(1,709)=4.06$, $p=.04$); females rated targets as "needing others' approval" more than did males ($F(1,709)=4.15$, $p=.04$); and females rated targets as "cries easily" more than did males ($F(1,709)=6.43$, $p=.01$).

A significant sex of subject by sex of target interaction was found for 7 items. In all but 1 one of these seven, each sex rated the target of its own sex relatively higher on the item than they rated the opposite sex target: "aggressive" ($F(2,709)=3.53$, $p=.03$), "independent" ($F(2,709)=5.64$, $p=.004$), "helpful" ($F(2,709)=3.94$, $p=.02$), "aware of others' feelings" ($F(2,709)=3.39$, $p=.03$), "never gives up" ($F(2,709)=4.18$, $p=.02$), "stands up under pressure" ($F(2,709)=11.37$, $p<.0001$). On the item "cries easily" each sex rated its own sex lower than they rated the opposite sex target ($F(2,709)=2.95$) $p=.05$).

Analysis of variance on two composite variables representing the "masculinity" and "femininity" clusters in the original scoring of the PAQ produced significant main effects for sex of target. For the "masculine" cluster, the means were Man=4.36, Woman=4.08, Person=4.21 ($F(2,713)=13.75$, $p<.0001$). For the "feminine" cluster, the means were Man=3.87, Woman=4.44, Person=3.99, ($F(2,713)=42.80$, $p<.0001$). For the "masculine"

cluster there was a significant sex of subject by sex of target interaction ($F(2,713)=5.90$, $p=.003$), indicating that subjects rated their own sex relatively higher on masculinity than they rated the opposite sex.

Discussion

Analyses showed that the traditional stereotypes of men and women have changed very little since the early 1970s when the PAQ was first developed. There were significant differences in the ratings of typical man versus typical woman on 19 of the 24 items (generally, typical person fell in the middle of the ratings for man and woman). Man and woman were not rated significantly differently on "independent", "active", "worldly", "needs others' approval", or "confident." The other items differed in the traditional stereotypical direction, with man receiving the highest ratings on agentic items and woman receiving the highest ratings on communal items.

The PAQ items that did not differentiate stereotypes of men from women in this study are items directly related to career-orientation. It appears that as women are increasingly entering the workforce and are pursuing careers (rather than "jobs") in greater numbers, stereotypes of women are including characteristics such as independence and self-confidence, and are dropping the traditional characteristics of home-orientation and passivity. However, the feminine stereotype found in this study still contains the characteristics representing nurturance and emotionality, while the masculine stereotype contains

characteristics representing forceful self-assertion.

Study 2

The second study was designed to ascertain current descriptions of "masculinity" and "femininity." The first study looked at descriptions of the typical man or woman and found that men and women are described differently on 19 of the 24 characteristics used in the study. "Masculine" is the concept applied to the set of attributes appropriate to a man, or the sex role stereotype for men. Similarly, "femininity" is the concept embodying the sex role stereotype for women. If students today believe that sex roles are disappearing, that men and women are expected to be more similar than different, then are the definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" changing to reflect androgyny? The first study provided strong support for the continued existence of distinct stereotypes concerning typical men and women; this study was designed to see if definitions of masculinity and femininity still differentiated sex roles along agentic and communal lines as in the past.

Method

Subjects. One hundred forty-five students (48 males and 95 females) in social psychology and sociology courses volunteered to complete a set of questionnaires. Approximately two-thirds of the subjects completed the questionnaires in the classroom, and the remainder completed them at home and returned them.

Procedure. Subjects completed questionnaires on which they rated either a "man", a "woman", or a "person" described as "masculine" or "feminine" on 23 items such as "likeable", "powerful", "good leader". The items were rated from 1, representing "not at all" to 8, representing "very much." The 23 items were selected to represent three orientations: social, power, and task.

A 2 x 3 x 2 (sex of subject by sex of target by term - masculine and feminine, the first two factors between groups factors and the last factor a within groups factor) analysis of variance was performed on each item and on composite variables representing the three orientations of social, power, and task.

Results

The separate analyses for each item produced significant main effects for term (masculine or feminine) for all but two of the 23 items. That is, subjects rated "masculine" men, women, and persons significantly differently from their ratings of "feminine" men, women, and persons. Table 2 presents the mean ratings for each term for each item. An analysis on the ratings of "person" alone produced significant differences on the same

items and in the same direction, indicating that it is the gender-role descriptors that effect the subjects' ratings, regardless of sex of target.

Insert Table 2 about here

There were significant sex of target main effects on only four of the 23 items: "powerful" means for man = 4.70, woman = 5.06, person = 5.07 ($F(2,137)=3.55$, $p=.03$); "aggressive" means for man = 4.55, woman = 5.14, person = 5.00 ($F(2,137)=6.23$, $p=.003$); "manipulative" means for man = 4.44, woman = 4.26, person = 4.95 ($F(2,137)=3.11$, $p=.05$); "respected" means for man = 4.59, woman = 5.05, person = 5.51 ($F(2,137)=11.22$, $p<.0001$). The mean ratings indicate that ratings for feminine man lowered the overall means for man on most items.

There were significant sex of subject main effects on only two items: "good leader" means for male subjects = 4.66, females = 5.07 ($F(1,131)=4.52$, $p=.04$); "successful" means for males = 5.24, females = 5.59 ($F(1,131)=5.40$, $p=.02$).

Composite variables were created from the 23 items to represent social-orientation (likeable, friendly, cooperative, happy, submissive, gentle, and helpful), task-orientation (respected, competent, self-confident, logical, independent, good leader, successful, and conservative reversed), and power-orientation (powerful, aggressive, manipulative, unemotional, assertive, dominant, active, and competitive). Analyses on each

of these composite variables produced significant main effects for term: social mean for masculine = 4.13 and feminine = 6.33 ($F(1,131)=357.33$, $p<.0001$); task mean for masculine = 4.54, feminine = 3.75 ($F(1,131)=38.23$, $p<.0001$); power mean for masculine = 6.19, feminine = 3.46 ($F(1,131)=429.91$, $p<.0001$).

Stereotypes of cross-gender typed men and women. There were significant sex of target by term interactions on ten items. An ANOVA excluding "person" produced the same ten significant interactions, indicating that it was Man and Woman that interacted with the terms masculine and feminine. Masculine men and Feminine women were rated relatively higher than feminine men and masculine women on the items "likeable" ($F(1,92)=25.54$, $p<.0001$), "powerful" ($F(1,92)=14.19$, $p=.0003$), "respected" ($F(1,92)=33.39$, $p<.0001$), "self-confident" ($F(1,92)=14.13$, $p=.0003$), "conservative" ($F(1,92)=9.49$, $p=.003$), "dominant" ($F(1,92)=7.47$, $p=.008$), "gentle" ($F(1,92)=8.39$, $p=.005$), "successful" ($F(1,92)=4.71$, $p=.03$), and "happy" ($F(1,92)=6.25$, $p=.01$). On the term "submissive" feminine men and masculine women were rated relatively higher than masculine men and feminine women ($F(1,92)=7.80$, $p=.006$). Table 3 gives the means for men and women by term (excluding "person") for the 10 items with significant interactions.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion

Masculine and feminine were perceived quite differently by the subjects in this study. Masculine represented task-orientation and power-orientation, while feminine represented social-orientation. The only terms not differentiating masculine from feminine were "logical" and "competent", terms associated with career and task-orientation. However, other task-oriented terms were perceived to be masculine (e.g., successful, good leader, active, respected). These results indicate that stereotypes continue to characterize masculinity as agentic and femininity as communal.

In this study, when man and woman were described half the time with the gender-"inappropriate" adjective (i.e., "masculine" woman and "feminine" man), subjects did not rate men and women significantly differently on most items. The sex role stereotypes of men and women were attenuated by gender-role descriptors of masculine and feminine. The ratings for feminine man lessened the average ratings for men and ratings for masculine woman raised the average ratings for women on traditional masculine characteristics, thus making average ratings for men and women relatively equal. These cross-sex gender-roles had the opposite effect on traditional feminine characteristics. Masculine women were rated as more agentic and

less communal than feminine women and feminine men were rated as more communal and less agentic than masculine men. These "out-of-role" men and women were not rated as positively - masculine women were the least likeable of all, and feminine men were the least respected of all.

These results show that not only are masculine and feminine still differentiated quite clearly, but that men and women whose gender-role is not "appropriate" to their sex are considered unlikeable, less happy, less respected.

Conclusions

These studies indicate that sex-role stereotypes do not appear to be dissolving 20-25 years after they were first defined by Rosenkrantz, et al. (1968). Men are still perceived to be more agentic and forceful and women are perceived to be more communal and passive. "Masculine" and "feminine" have clear definitions that differ, and men who are described as "feminine" and women who are described as "masculine" are evaluated quite negatively. The first study suggested that stereotypes of women are changing somewhat to include traits of independent, active, worldly, and self-confident. Perhaps this small change should provide encouragement that as women continue to enter the workforce and to successfully pursue careers, sex role stereotypes will broaden to incorporate these new roles.

References

Heilman, M.E., Block, C.J., Matell, R.F., & Simon, M.C. (1989). Has anything changed: Current characterizations of men, women, and managers. Journal of Applied Psychology, 74, 935-942.

Sherriffs, A.C., & McKee, J.P. (1957). Qualitative aspects of beliefs about men and women. Journal of Personality, 25, 451-464.

Spence, J.T. & Helmreich, R. (1978). Masculinity & Femininity: Their psychological dimensions, correlates, and antecedents. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Spence, J.T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. (1974). The Personal Attributes Questionnaire: A measure of sex-role stereotypes and masculinity-femininity. JSAS catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 4, 43(Ms. No. 617).

Rosenkrantz, P.S., Vogel, S.R., Bee, H., Broverman, I.K., & Broverman, D.M. (1968). Sex role stereotypes and self-concepts in college students. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 32, 287-295.

Ruble, T.L. (1983). Sex stereotypes: Issues of change in the 1970s. Sex Roles, 9, 397-402.

Schein, V.E. (1975). Relations between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers. Journal of Applied Psychology, 57, 95-100.

Werner, P.D. & LaRussa, G. W. (1985). Persistence and change in sex-role stereotypes. Sex Roles, 12, 1089-1100.

Table 1

MEAN RATINGS OF ITEMS BY SEX OF TARGET

	Means			
Item	Adult Woman	Adult Man	Adult Person	
Men rated significantly higher than women:				
aggressive	3.86	4.14	3.95	a, c, e
dominant	3.68	4.18	3.89	a, d, e
competitive	4.36	4.90	4.60	a, c, d, e
never gives up	4.15	4.32	4.08	a, c, e
feels superior	3.78	4.18	3.94	a, d, e
stands up under pressure	3.99	4.39	4.19	a, c, d, e
Women rated significantly higher than men:				
emotional	4.57	3.63	3.89	a, d, e
excitable in crisis	4.25	3.85	3.84	a, d
devote self to others	4.36	3.55	3.72	a, d
gentle	4.17	3.58	3.82	a, b, d, e
helpful to others	4.49	4.14	4.14	a, c, d
kind	4.45	4.28	4.12	a, d
feelings easily hurt	4.18	3.58	3.63	a, d
aware of others' feelings	4.59	3.81	4.07	a, c, d, e
not decisive	3.56	3.07	3.04	a, d
cries easily	4.09	2.74	3.35	a, c, d, e
understanding of others	4.42	3.91	4.02	a, d
warm with others	4.44	4.05	4.16	a, d
need for security	4.55	4.22	4.28	a, d

Table 1 - continued

<u>No significant difference between men and women:</u>				
independent	4.35	4.45	4.49	c
active	4.24	4.28	4.11	
worldly	3.83	3.78	3.87	b
self-confident	4.34	4.45	4.30	
need others' approval	4.09	3.88	3.91	b

a - sex of target main effect, $p < .04$

b - sex of subject main effect, $p < .05$

c - sex of target by sex of subject interaction, $p < .05$

d - ratings of "woman" significantly different from ratings of "person"

e - ratings of "man" significantly different from ratings of "person"

Table 2

MEAN RATINGS OF ITEMS BY TERM - MASCULINE AND FEMININE

Item	Means: Masculine	Means: Feminine	
Masculine rated significantly higher than Feminine:			
powerful	6.29	3.59	a, c, d
aggressive	6.52	3.26	a, c
manipulative	5.22	3.86	a, c
respected	5.25	4.81	a, c, d
self-confident	6.45	5.29	a, d
independent	6.64	4.58	a
unemotional	5.34	2.51	a
assertive	6.37	3.84	a
dominant	6.52	3.08	a, d
good leader	5.62	4.26	a, b
active	6.46	4.90	a
competitive	6.88	4.11	a
successful	5.77	5.18	a, b, d
Feminine rated significantly higher than Masculine:			
likeable	4.90	6.01	a, d
cooperative	4.51	6.52	a
friendly	5.14	6.82	a
conservative	4.21	4.85	a, d
submissive	2.80	5.26	a, d

Table 2 - continued

gentle	3.69	6.96	a, d
helpful	4.88	6.82	a
happy	5.18	5.88	a, d
<u>No significant difference between masculine and feminine:</u>			
competent	5.60	5.50	
logical	5.02	5.23	

a - term main effect, $p < .02$

b - sex of subject main effect, $p < .03$

c - sex of target main effect, $p < .03$

d - term by target sex interaction, $p < .05$

Table 3

MEAN RATINGS OF MEN AND WOMEN BY TERM

	Means			
	Masculine	Masculine	Feminine	Feminine
Item	Man	Woman	Man	Woman
likeable	5.62	3.89	5.40	6.47
powerful	6.48	5.85	2.92	4.21
respected	5.60	4.42	3.58	5.72
self-confident	6.74	6.04	4.58	5.87
conservative	4.58	3.74	3.98	5.38
dominant	6.62	6.28	2.60	3.51
submissive	2.66	3.00	5.80	4.72
gentle	4.46	3.26	6.74	7.23
successful	5.98	5.34	4.78	5.47
happy	5.52	4.98	5.46	6.11